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# SCIENCE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1888.

THE *Independent* for Oct. 25 has an interesting article by President Gilman on 'The Future of the Johns Hopkins University.' It is the settled purpose of that institution, for the future as in the past, to maintain a collegiate or undergraduate course of study, and also a system of university or post-graduate courses. The college students come mostly from Maryland. The post-graduate students are from all parts of the country, but President Gilman thinks that in the future they will come more and more largely from the South. The university is now in most departments very well organized, but two professorships of great importance—philosophy and English—are still unfilled. Professor Hall, who was to have been the head of the philosophical department, has been called to the presidency of another institution, and his place has not yet been supplied. The search for a professor of English literature, too, has not yet been successful; for the authorities of the university want a man like Matthew Arnold or James Russell Lowell, and such men are not easy to get. Strenuous efforts are making, however, to fill both these positions, and every one will hope that the right men may be found. Mr. Hopkins, as is well known, left a large sum to found a hospital, with the intention that the university should establish a medical school in connection therewith. The hospital buildings are now completed, and the university has already established three professorships as the beginning of a medical department. "The only cause for anxiety in the future of the Johns Hopkins University," says President Gilman, "is the suspension of dividends by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The founder gave the university fifteen thousand shares of the common stock of the railroad, and he recommended the trustees in the most explicit terms to keep, protect, and defend this investment." The income from this stock has been about \$150,000 a year, and has been the main support of the university; and, now that it has ceased for a time, there is little to sustain the institution except the tuition-fees and the moderate surplus that has been accumulated in past years. President Gilman suggests that the friends of the university should make up an emergency fund to relieve its present needs, and expresses confidence that such an institution as the Johns Hopkins University "will not long be allowed to suffer for the want of an income." This confidence we believe to be justified; and certainly every lover of learning will hope that a university of so much promise may suffer no check in its useful career.

THE THOROUGHNESS with which statistics are collected under the direction of Col. Carroll D. Wright by the Labor Bureau at Washington is well illustrated in the gathering of the facts in regard to marriage and divorce in the United States, that are to be embodied in a special report that will be ready early in January. The special agents engaged in this work have obtained the figures from every court in the country having divorce jurisdiction. When it is stated that there are more than twenty-seven hundred of these courts, and that the period of investigation extends over the ten years from 1876 to 1886, the magnitude of the work may be imagined. The report in each case will give the ages of the persons divorced, the cause for which the separation was granted, state whether the husband or wife obtained the decree, the number of children, the place of marriage, and the migration of the couple since then. This latter inquiry is made in order to show whether the change of residence was *bona fide*, or merely for the purpose of obtaining a divorce. Statistics showing the length of time the

marriage lasted, and other facts that may tend to throw light on the subject, have also been collected. The number of marriages will be given by counties for the same period, so that the ratio of divorces to marriages may be seen. There will be added a synopsis of the divorce laws of every State, and the statistics of divorces in the principal countries of Europe. No such investigation for original information has ever been made in any country, and there is none in which it could be made. If it were possible for such a force of experts to be organized elsewhere as Colonel Wright commands the services of to make the inquiries, prejudice, red tape, and respect for established institutions, would prevent them from obtaining the information they sought. Americans have reason to feel proud when they remember that nowhere upon the globe is there an organization, public or private, so well equipped for the collection of social statistics as the United States Labor Bureau.

AT LENGTH THERE IS PROSPECT of the speedy erection of a building for the Congressional Library,—for this we suppose we all ought to be truly thankful, in view of the narrow-minded way in which Congress treated the subject at the late session,—but we fear that the edifice will not be one upon which we shall have occasion to waste much pride. This is no reflection upon General Casey, who is hereafter to have full charge of the work, for we believe that he will make the best building possible with the funds at his disposal. The foundations of the building have already been built in accordance with a plan that contemplated a structure ultimately to cost ten or twelve million dollars. The cost of this work and of the necessary excavations has been several hundred thousand dollars, probably more than half a million. Economy requires the utilization of this work, and General Casey has therefore wisely concluded that the plan of the building he will erect shall be substantially the same as that before contemplated, but that he will so manage it by saving upon the cost of material, on ornamentation, etc., as to keep his expenditures within the four million which Congress has appropriated, and to which it has absolutely limited the cost. It is rare that a public building does not cost from twenty-five to fifty per cent *more* than is estimated: to erect a building for seventy-five per cent *less* than the estimated cost will be a task that no one will envy General Casey. And yet there will be a building of some sort completed much sooner than there has been any reason to anticipate. It will afford accommodation to the books and other literary and art treasures now in the Congressional Library, and for those that will accumulate for a few years to come. By the time it is full, there may be in Washington some Congress that can appreciate the value of a great library, and that will be broad-minded and patriotic enough to provide a building suitable for its accommodation, and of such style of architecture that it will not cause an American citizen to blush when he contemplates it.

## CENTENARIANS IN FRANCE.<sup>1</sup>

M. LEVASSEUR has recently published the result of an inquiry into the number and condition of those who had reached the age of one hundred years, which gives interesting information regarding the extreme limits of human existence, and the proportion of men that attain it. The newspaper account of centenarians frequently ascribing an age of anywhere from one hundred and ten to one hundred and thirty years, and emphasizing details showing remarkable preservation of faculty, is of course utterly unreliable. A slight investigation is often sufficient to show the groundlessness of such pretensions. In 1871, of 37 reported centenarians in Bavaria,

<sup>1</sup> See an article by M. V. Turquan, *Revue Scientifique*, Sept. 1, 1888.